(b) whether it is a fact that after the helicopter accident that killed former Lok Sabha Speaker G.M.C. Balyogi, Government decided to hold refresher and training courses for chopper pilots which never took off;

(c) if so, what are the reasons therefor; and

(d) what steps Government propose to take to ensure the safety of passengers travelling in choppers in the light of various crashes that took place during the last three years?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI PRAFUL PATEL): (a) Yes, Sir. Federal Aviation Regulations (FARs) of United States of America stipulate recurrent training for pilots.

(b) to (d) In India, Commercial Helicopter Pilots are required to undergo proficiency checks every six months, which is in accordance with international standards stipulated by International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO).

After the accident in which former Speaker, Lok Sabha was killed, Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) has revised proficiency check and instrument rating check requirements for all helicopter operators. The revised proficiency check requirements include re-current ground training specific emergency exercise as part of the proficiency check. Guidelines for conducting re-current and emergency exercises during proficiency checks and instrument rating check have also been issued to Instructors/ Examiners.

Anomalies in travel concessions to senior citizens

3416. SHRIMATI KUM KUM RAI : Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether some Senior Citizens have pointed out gross anomalies in 50 per cent travel concessions being given to them;

(b) if so, the details of anomalies with the reasons for not allowing the usual relief in the event of the patients travelling to seek medical assistance; and

(c) the number of Senior Citizens availed air travel concession on Indian Airlines in the last two years with purpose of travel?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI PRAFUL PATEL): (a) and (b) No specific representations have been

received in respect of availment of senior citizen concessions by patients travelling to seek medical assistance. However, Indian Airlines has modified this scheme *w.e.f.* 4th April 2005 to delete the condition of purchase of ticket seven days in advance. Since, now there is no time limit for purchase of tickets, the senior citizens will be able to avail the concession even in emergency cases subject to compliance with other conditions of the scheme.

(c) A total of 204958, 101487 and 85442 senior citizens availed themselves of air travel concession on Indian Airlines Limited during the years 2002-03, 2003-04 and 2004-05 (upto February, 2005) respectively. Further, at the time of allowing the concession the passenger is not required to disclose the purpose of travel.

Violation of traffic rights

3417. SHRI B. J. PANDA : Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that certain airlines have been found violating the traffic rights;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether Government propose to rein in such airlines; and

(d) if so, the details of the action plan?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI PRAFUL PATEL): (a) No such case has come to the notice of the Government.

(b) to (d) Do not arise.

Retirement age of Pilots

3418. SHRI PRAMOD MAHAJAN: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the retirement age of Pilots was increased recently;

(b) if so, what is the new retirement age; and

(c) what is the international standard of retirement age for pilots including countries like USA, UK, France etc.